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THE AUTHORSHIP OF *TWO ITALIAN GENTLEMEN*

The authorship of the early Elizabethan comedy *Fidele and Fortunio*, the *Two Italian Gentlemen*, long ascribed to Anthony Munday, has recently been called in question and an attempt has been made to assign the play to George Chapman. It is not, perhaps, a matter of supreme importance which of these authors is responsible for this play. It is not an original work¹ and has little intrinsic value. As the latest editor of Chapman, however, I feel bound to give my reasons for the exclusion of this play from the recently published edition of his comedies, and to explain why it will not appear in the supplementary volume of *Chapman's Plays and Poems*, where, if there were any sufficient reason for attaching it to his name, the student of Chapman might reasonably expect to find it. I wish therefore to make a somewhat more detailed examination than has yet appeared of the history of this play and of the reasons for ascribing it to Munday or Chapman.

The *Stationers' Register* for November 12, 1584, contains the following entry:

A booke entituled fedele et fortuna. The deceiptes in love Discoursed in a Commedia of ii Italyan gent. and translated into English.

Apart from a reference to one of the characters, Crackstone, and his "cannibal words" by Nash ("Have with you to Saffron Walden," *Works*, III, 102) there is, so far as I know, no contemporary allusion

¹ The play is an adaptation of Luigi Pasqualigo's *Il Fedele*, 1576. A Latin version of this play by Abraham Fraunce, dating ca. 1582-83, has been edited by Professor Moore Smith in the *Materialien zur Kunde*. Fraunce's work follows the original much more closely than the English play does. See *Modern Language Review*, III, 178.

to this play, and apart from certain inaccurate references in Langbaine and the old play lists, it was apparently lost to sight till rediscovered by Collier, who gave a short account of it in his *History of English Dramatic Poetry* (ed. 1831, p. 241). Halliwell printed some extracts in his *Literature of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, and recently, a copy of the original Q having turned up in the Duke of Devonshire's library, it has been reprinted by the Malone Society (1909).

Collier in a note (p. 241) stated that "not more than two copies of this piece are known to exist, one without the title-page, the other wanting also the dedication." The Devonshire copy, apparently one of those known to Collier, lacks both title-page and dedication, and no other copy is at present known to exist. It has been suggested therefore (*Malone Society Collections*, I, 3, pp. 219 ff.) that Collier's copy containing the dedication signed A.M. may never have existed and that the dedication may be the composition of Collier himself. After my discovery of Collier's forgery of the dedication to *All Fools* no one can be more likely than myself to suspect an unsupported statement of Collier's, but in this case there seems to be another witness to the existence of the copy containing the Dedication. Hazlitt (*Handbook to English Literature*, p. 406) has the following statement:

Only two copies are known, neither of which has the title-page. . . . Dedicated to John Heardston, Esq., by A.M.; on the reverse of this dedication is a Prologue spoken before the Queen, consisting of two six-line stanzas. The dedication is printed in Collier's *H.E.D.P.*; it is only in one of the two known copies.

An attempt has been made by Mr. Greg, the editor of the *Malone Society Collection* (I, 3, p. 220), to discredit this corroboration on the ground that Hazlitt mentions a Prologue to the Queen which Collier does not, although such a prologue would naturally have caught his attention. He then goes on to suggest that Collier's citation (*H.E.D.P.*, p. 243) of two six-line stanzas is responsible for Hazlitt's statement, and concludes: "It would be unsafe to regard Hazlitt's note as anything but a confused and inaccurate summary of Collier's description." This conclusion seems to me, I confess, quite too severe. Since Collier does not mention a Prologue before the Queen—he

states in fact that we do not know whether the play was ever acted—Hazlitt cannot by any process of reasoning however confused have got the idea of such a prologue from Collier. The stanzas quoted by Collier¹ are a love-song and cannot possibly be taken as a prologue of any sort and, a point which Mr. Greg fails to note, Hazlitt makes the explicit statement that they occur on "the reverse of the Dedication," whereas Collier's citation is taken from the body of the play (B, iii, *verso*). I think one of two things is clear: either Hazlitt saw a copy of Q containing *both* Dedication and Prologue, or he deliberately invented the latter. In the first case we have a corroboration of Collier's statement as to the Dedication; in the latter a false statement as discreditable to Hazlitt as the suggested forgery of the Dedication would be to Collier. I cannot help feeling that the first of these alternatives is the more credible.

Further, Mr. Greg attempts to challenge the authenticity of the Dedication² printed by Collier on stylistic grounds:

There are two passages [he says] which seem slightly suspicious; . . . in connection with the phrase "impeach me of presumption" it should be observed that while "to impeach of an act" is a common construction, there seems no authority for "to impeach of a quality." Again the phrase "the delicate conveyance" seems to mean the delicate manner in which the idea is communicated, but the earliest instance of conveyance in the sense of communication cited by the N.E.D. is dated 1662, though it seems indeed to have been used by Nash as early as 1594 (*Unfortunate Traveller*, ep. ded.).

In regard to the first of these I may say that while I cannot find an exact parallel to the phrase of the dedication, the N.E.D.

¹ If love be like the flower that in the night,
When darkness drowns the glory of the skies,
Smells sweet and glitters in the gazer's sight;
But when the gladsome sun begins to rise,
And he that views it would the same embrace,
It withereth and loseth all his grace,

Why do I love, and like the cursed tree,
Whose buds appear, but fruit will not be seen?
Why do I languish for the flower I see,
Whose root is rot when all the leaves are green?
In such a case, it is a point of skill
To follow chance, and love against my will.

² I reprint here the significant portions of the dedication:

"To the worshipfull and very courteous Gentleman, Maister John Heardson, Esquier, A.M.
commendeth this pleasant and fine conceited Comoe die.

"Woorshipful sir, my acquaintaunce with you is very little, which may impeach me of presumption in this mine attempt: but the good report of your affable nature to every one, giveth me hope to be entertained amongst them. I commend to your freendly viewes this prettie conceit, as well for the invention, as the delicate conveyance thereof."

(s.v. "impeach," 4) has "impeach me with error" under the date of 1590, and "impeach" as a substantive occurs in a very similar phrase,¹ "no impeach of valor," in 3 K.H. VI, i. 4. 60. As to "conveyance," Nash's phrase "some reasonable conveyance of history" seems to me a very close parallel to the use of this word in the dedication. In both "conveyance" means "treatment," "form of expression," as opposed to "invention" i.e., originality. The N.E.D. (s.v. "conveyance," 9) gives several examples of this use of the word. One of these from Robinson's translation of *Utopia* (1551) has the same collocation of words as the epistle, i.e., "witty invention and fine conveyance." These are, indeed, as Mr. Greg himself admits, "slender grounds for pronouncing the epistle a forgery." I think in fact that even on stylistic grounds a stronger proof than this can be cited to show that it is really the work of Anthony Munday and not a forgery by Collier. This is the use of the adjective "delicate" in reference to style, which appears to have been a favorite word of Munday's. The title-page of *Zelauto* (1580) speaks of that book as containing a "delicate disputation"; and that of the *Banquet of Dainty Conceits* (1584) has the phrase "delicate and choice inventions." Another piece of evidence testifying to Munday's authorship of the play, and therefore presumably of the dedication, may be found in a parallel which occurs between the entry, cited above, in S.R. of *Fidele and Fortunio*, which no doubt represents the lost title-page of this play, and the title-page of *Zelauto*; the first contains the words "deceiptes in love discoursed in a Commedia of ii Italyan gent."; the second, "a disputation gallantly discoursed between two noble gentlemen of Italye."

After this attempt, hardly successful it seems to me, to disprove the hitherto accepted authorship, the editor goes on to introduce the new claimant. This he does on the basis of the interesting discovery made by Mr. Charles Crawford that two couplets of this play (ll. 661-62 and 655-56) are quoted under the heading "Woman" in *England's Parnassus* (1600) and are ascribed by the editor of that work to George Chapman. In his recent edition of *England's Parnassus*, where the lines in question appear on p. 231, Mr. Crawford

¹ Cf. also "appeach of ungentlenesse," and "appeach of treason" in *Faerie Queene*, III, x, 6, 8; and V, v, 37, 3.

repeats the statement over and over that this assignment proves Chapman's authorship (see pp. xix, xx, xxi, xxiv, 494-95 and 537). I yield to no man in my admiration of Mr. Crawford's tireless industry and wide reading in the field of Elizabethan literature, but I cannot but feel that he has been rash in accepting this ascription as proof positive of Chapman's authorship. The value of such an ascription depends wholly upon the character of the ascriber. What was Allot's character as a connoisseur of contemporary literature? I will let Mr. Crawford answer: "his range of reading is not a very wide one" (p. xxv), he had a "bad judgement and a treacherous memory." His method of work described by Mr. Crawford (pp. xxv-xxvi and 449) was absolutely certain to lead to errors, and, as a matter of fact, 130 of the 2,350 quotations in the work Mr. Crawford shows to be wrongly ascribed (pp. xxv and 542-44). Thus, for example, immediately after the lines from *Two Italian Gentlemen* which Allot ascribes to Chapman come three lines with the signature *Idem* (i.e., Chapman), which, as Crawford points out, occur in *Tottel's Miscellany*. Further, three passages from Chapman's known works (Nos. 1536, 1715, and 2098) are ascribed to Spenser. Mr. Crawford himself makes light of Allot's authority when it conflicts with his own opinions, as in the case of the anonymous play *Selimus* which Allot assigns to Greene and Crawford holds to be Marlowe's.

It is plain, I think, that an ascription by such an editor as Allot cannot be regarded as possessing any positive authority. It is useful only as furnishing a clue, a hypothesis of authorship, to be confirmed or disproved by further research. Mr. Crawford recognizes this, for he goes on to confirm Allot's ascription of this play to Chapman by arguments which deserve our consideration.

In the first place, he holds that Allot was on terms of intimacy with Chapman (p. 495), who told him that "*Two Italian Gentlemen* was his work" (p. xxx). For this intimacy Mr. Crawford adduces the following reasons: Two of Allot's quotations from Chapman's continuation of *Hero and Leander* show variant readings, "obviously designed by Chapman himself." The first of these (No. 258 in Crawford's *England's Parnassus*) does in fact appear to be a better reading than that of the printed text. The second (No. 1590) is

a palpable misprint, "audacious" for the authentic "and actions." Mr. Crawford in his note on this passage (p. 483) goes so far as to say that there is "sound sense in his reading which happens to repeat a sentiment that occurs frequently in Chapman." If he had carefully examined the passage (*H. and L.*, III, 60-64) from which this quotation is taken, he would have seen that in it Chapman is rebuking the rash audacity of Leander in enjoying Hero. Time, he says, and ceremony would have banished all offense. To read "audacious" in l. 63 is to declare that time makes legitimate every birth (i.e., deed) of audacious men, which is the exact opposite of what Chapman has just been saying. I am quite ready to admit that the first of this pair of quotations shows that Allot may have printed from a manuscript copy of *Hero and Leander* (not necessarily in Chapman's own possession) in which the true reading occurred, but the second proves less than nothing, being in fact a blunder due either to Allot himself or his printer.

Again, Mr. Crawford holds that the quotation (No. 2240) assigned to Marlowe, but appearing nowhere else than in this collection, must have come into Allot's hands through Chapman, who "had access to Marlowe's papers" after that poet's death (p. xxix). This seems to me a chain of hypotheses. In the first place it assumes that the passage is from an unknown poem by Marlowe,¹ in the second, that Chapman had access to Marlowe's papers, in the third, that Allot could have seen the poem from which this quotation is taken only through Chapman. Not one of these, I venture to say, is an established fact, though all are possible. One cannot establish an intimacy between Allot and Chapman on such grounds as these. Neither does the fact that Allot assigns four quotations (Nos. 777, 1842, 2054, and 2055) to Chapman which have not yet been traced to his published work prove, as Mr. Crawford seems to assume (pp. xxx and 495), that Allot enjoyed special privileges with Chapman. These quotations may all come from Chapman's works, but when we remember the practice of Elizabethan poets of allowing their works to circulate in manuscript before publication, this would only show

¹ I have not the time or space to discuss here the question of Marlowe's authorship of the interesting fragment in *England's Parnassus*. I can only say that the verse-form, a stanza rhyming *abababcc* does not appear in any of his known work, which seems to me a *prima facie* argument against it.

that Allot found these quotations in manuscript poems of Chapman's—by no means that Chapman showed them to him in manuscript (p. 495). There are five authors represented in *England's Parnassus* to whom more untraced quotations are assigned by Allot than the four he gives Chapman. Are we to hold that he lived on still greater terms of intimacy with these writers?

Further, on pages xxxix and 495 Mr. Crawford gives a slight summary of other arguments which he holds point to Chapman's authorship. In the first place, the play was composed about 1584, when Chapman was twenty-five years old. This of course is only an argument for the possibility of his having written it. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that the early date tells rather heavily against Chapman's authorship. Nothing is known of Chapman between his entrance to one of the universities in 1574 (*Athenae Oxonienses*, II, col. 575) and the publication of his *Shadow of Night* in 1594. I can hardly believe that Chapman could have composed this play in 1584. Collier seems uncertain whether this play was ever performed, but the elaborate stage directions (see those after ll. 75, 191, 270, 384, and 433 in the Malone Society reprint) show plainly that the Q was printed from a stage copy. We may therefore assume a production of this play and Nash's reference (see above p. 65) would seem to show that one of its characters, Crackstone,¹ had become well known. This implies a certain amount of success and it seems to me unlikely, to say the least, that Chapman, if he were the author, should have relapsed into non-production and obscurity for another ten years.

The internal evidence which Mr. Crawford brings forward as corroboration (p. xxxiv) is as follows: it agrees with known work of the poet in displaying a peculiar kind of humor and fondness for practical joking, its comic characters are inveterate punsters, they invent "cannibal words," and make a point of putting the cart before the horse, Crackstone in this respect being a worthy precursor of Poggio in *The Gentleman Usher*. Even if we were to grant all this, it does not seem to me very convincing. Mr. Greg, who accepts Allot's ascription of the play to Chapman, remarks that Mr. Crawford's

¹ Nash couples Crackstone with the well-known figure of Basilisco in *Soliman and Perseda*.

opinion as to the resemblance of the humor of the play to that of Chapman is "necessarily of too personal a character to add much to the weight of the external evidence" (*Mal. Soc. Col.*, I, 3, p. 222).

Chapman's known work bears everywhere the sign manual of his authorship, and it has not been a matter of great difficulty to reclaim his unsigned plays *Sir Giles Goosecap* and *Charlemagne* (published by Bullen as *The Distracted Emperor*) or to detect his share in the collaborated plays *Cabot* and *Eastward Ho!* But a careful study of the *Two Italian Gentlemen* has not revealed to me a single trace of Chapman's well-known style. The shambling, irregular meter and the stanzaic forms inserted in the dialogue (see for instance ll. 412-17) are quite unlike anything in Chapman. Puns and practical joking occur, of course, in all early Elizabethan comedy and prove nothing as to authorship. The one positive similarity that Mr. Crawford finds is between Crackstone and Poggio, and even here I must take issue with him. Crackstone is a translation of the stock figure of Italian comedy, the *Miles Gloriosus*, into English. Like his original he is a boaster and a coward; but the translator has equipped him with a "humour" of malapropisms and "cannibal words." He says "chaplen" for "champion" (l. 1073); "infancie" for "infamy" (l. 1349); "liberalitie" for "liberty" (l. 1655); he misuses proper names: "Juniper" for "Jupiter" (l. 836), "Sampier" for "Sampson" (l. 1397), "Pedantonie" for "Pedante" (l. 1524). He uses such words as "magnaniminstrelsie" (l. 129), "terrebinthinall" (l. 844), "perplexionablest" (l. 1453), and "conswaped" (l. 1579). Poggio is quite another type. Like his predecessor, Sir Giles Goosecap, he is a well-born but half-imbecile gentleman whose muddled thought cannot distinguish reality from imagination and expresses itself in muddled language. "He speaks muddles still" (*Gentleman Usher*, III, iii, 218). Thus Poggio beats a smith in his sleep, runs out "with his heels about his hose" (*G.U.*, I, i, 47-48), and gives an account of the wounding of Vincentio (V, ii, 71-75) which is a perfect masterpiece of bad reporting. I do not find anywhere in Poggio's speech the deliberate malapropisms and "cannibal words" of Crackstone, and vice versa I find only once or twice in Crackstone the trick of putting the cart before the horse in speech (l. 71, "with a fresh hed in my toy"; l. 1538 "fair fooles makes

words fain")¹ which earns Poggio his nickname of "Cousin Hysteron Proteron." In *Modern Philology*, XIII, 215, M. Schoell has pointed out that both Poggio and Sir Giles derive from Le Sieur Gaulard of Estienne Tabourot's *Les apophtegmes du Sieur Gaulard*, a silly country gentleman who was continually doing and saying foolish things. M. Schoell's accumulation of parallels proves conclusively that Chapman drew upon this work for the character of Goosecap and in a less degree for that of Poggio.

Crackstone and Poggio, then, have a different ancestry, represent different "humours," and have only the superficial resemblance that both entertain the audience by a misuse—different in each case—of their mother-tongue. I do not think this goes to prove a common authorship.

Such then are the proofs that have been alleged for Chapman's authorship of *Two Italian Gentlemen*. I cannot believe that they have any validity, and it might seem that they were hardly worth refuting. But an assertion made as positively and repeatedly as Mr. Crawford has made that of Chapman's authorship has a way of getting itself repeated and tacitly accepted. I think, however, that no careful student of Chapman can ever believe that he wrote this play. In Mr. Crawford's own words (p. 495), "nobody would have thought of associating him with such a crude effort if the compiler of *England's Parnassus* had not assigned the play to him." And I think that henceforth no one will do so, unless he accepts Mr. Crawford's conclusion that in this case—though not elsewhere—Allot's ascription possesses final authority.

I hold no brief for Munday's authorship of this play. But in closing I would like to call attention to certain facts which seem to me to point very clearly to Munday as the author.

In the first place the dedication printed by Collier is signed with his initials, A. M. Under the circumstances I do not attach great weight to this dedication, but until it has been proved a forgery it establishes at least a presumption for Munday.

Secondly, the date 1584 suits Munday far better than it does Chapman. Munday had been in Italy in 1578–79, during which time

¹ Cf. a similar trick by Pedante (l. 1486). In all three cases the trick is used to make a comic rhyme. It is not a "humour" of the character.

he might have read or seen *Il Fedele*. In 1580 he was back in London, working and apparently acting. He found a patron in the Italianate Earl of Oxford to whom he dedicated several works. He signs himself repeatedly Oxford's "servant," and this may mean that he was a member of Oxford's company of actors. No doubt a version for them of a new and popular Italian comedy would have pleased the Earl. It is certain, at least, that the date of this play before 1584 comes at a time when Munday was in the very heyday of his productivity, writing poems, ballads, pamphlets, romances, and perhaps one other play.¹

Thirdly, there is the interesting fact that a passage of this play (ll. 224-40) containing three six-line stanzas appears with a few trifling variations in *England's Helicon* over the signature Shepherd Tony. Mr. Crawford, it is true, altogether rejects (p. 518) the usual identification of this author with Anthony Munday. I have not time to debate this matter at length, but would call attention to two facts: first, that this stanza with the rhyme-scheme *ababcc* is not uncommon in Munday's work. I note instances in *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* (*Webster's Works*, IV, 250), in the two Robin Hood plays (see Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, VIII, 158, 159, 198), in *John à Kent* (I, iii), and in his *Sundry Examples* (1580). Moreover in 1583 Munday published a volume now lost called *The Sweet Sobs and Amourous Complaints of Shepherds and Nymphs*. This seems to have attracted considerable attention. Webster in his *Discourse of English Poetry*, 1586, praises Munday's work, especially upon the subject of nymphs and shepherds. This would seem a good reason for the title of "Shepherd Tony," a signature attached to seven poems in *England's Helicon*. Lastly, and this seems to me a clinching argument, another of the poems ascribed in *England's Helicon* to Shepherd Tony appears in Munday's romance *Primaleon* (1609). This work was translated from the French version of Chappuis, but the verse does not appear in the original (see Bullen's edition of *England's Helicon*, p. viii).

There are, moreover, a number of interesting resemblances between *Two Italian Gentlemen* and the plays in which Munday is

¹ Fleay holds that Munday wrote the play *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* about 1584 for Oxford's company. This may be true, but if so the play has been carefully revised. Murray (*English Dramatic Companies*) admits the possibility of this ascription, but a later date (ca. 1600) is suggested in the Malone Society reprint, 1912.

known to have had a hand. No very close parallels can be expected, for a considerable period of time intervenes between this play and the earliest of the others (*John à Kent* is supposed to date about 1595) during which time a great development in the drama had taken place, including among other things the substitution of blank verse for the "jigging veins of rhyming mother wits." Moreover, *Two Italian Gentlemen* is not an original play, but an adaptation of an Italian comedy. I note, however, in *John à Kent* a comic misuse of words like that of Crackstone, "retoritie" for "authority," "accessary" for "necessary" (I, 3), etc.; such "cannibal words" as "ministrically," "prerogastride" (II, 2); mock Latin (I, 3) such as Crackstone uses (ll. 398-406), the word *Pediculus* (II, 2) applied to a schoolmaster as Crackstone uses it (l. 1459), and an occasional use of the six-line stanza already referred to. In the *Downfall of Robin Hood* (pp. 135, 139) we have a number of comic "malapropisms" not unlike some of Crackstone's, and a variety of meters which reminds one somewhat of the varying metrical form of *Two Italian Gentlemen*. Although by the time of the Robin Hood plays (1598) blank verse was established as the recognized form of dramatic verse, I find in these plays not only blank verse but Skeltonic verse, rhymed couplets, alternate rhymes, Munday's favorite six-line stanza, and a frequent use of four-foot verse. I doubt whether with our present knowledge of Munday's dramatic work it would be possible to establish on internal evidence a convincing argument for his authorship of any anonymous play; but the facts that I have mentioned seem to me to point directly to him.

External and internal evidence alike, then, make it probable that Munday was the translator of this work; and, as every student of our early drama knows, a fair degree of probability is, as a rule, all that we can expect to obtain in questions such as this. Certainly, if I am any judge of the facts, the claim set up for Chapman weighs as nothing in the balance of probabilities against the traditional assignment of the play to Antony Munday.

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